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Mongol

*563 174 out of Lake Baikal into the Yenisei. A number of indications point to the probability that the majority of the Western Mongols are the descendants of tribes which originally were forest tribes and later moved into steppe country, where they became pastoral nomads.

The Western Mongols eventually formed a federation, referred to in the Chinese chronicles as the Oirat Federation, and also known as the Ölöt Federation. (The Mongol written form of Ölöt is *Ughelet.*) In the seventeenth century the Jungar[22] or "left wing" of this federation attempted to conquer the rest of the federation. It is from the Jungars that Jungaria is named. Of those who would not submit to the Jungars a large number, including many Torguts and Khoshots, fought their way westward through territory held by Turkic tribes until they reached the lower Volga, where they became known as "the Kalmuks," probably from a Turkic word meaning "the remnant." Eighty years later the Manchus invaded Sinkiang, defeated and almost annihilated the Jungars, and invited those who had resisted the Jungars to return. Some did, including the ancestors of most of the present Torguts of Sinkiang, while others remained in Russia.

[47] •566 *563 In their economic life the Mongols of Sinkiang closely resemble the Kazakhs of Sinkiang. In their social organization, the hereditary Princes of the Mongols enjoy a much stronger and much more institutionalized feudal power than the sultans of the Kazakh tribes. One result of this difference is that poor Mongols are much poorer than poor Kazakhs. In addition, the Lama Buddhist religion of the Mongols is institutionalized to the point of constituting an ecclesiastical feudalism, with the result that the payment of dues and the making of special gifts for the upkeep of lama monasteries is another principal cause of the impoverishment of the Mongols as compared with the Kazakhs.

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*563 631 Until the Chinese Revolution of 1911, the Mongol Princes had virtual autonomy in administering their tribal territories. Under the Republic, the Chinese authorities have upheld the power

[22] In written Mongol, *jeghun gar,* "left hand"; translated as "left wing." In Mongol, "left" is equivalent to "eastern."

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423 241 applies water to land has the right to both water and land; but by a legal reasoning which is not difficult to follow, the ancient prescriptive communal right of the man whose labor helps to bring the water to the field can be superseded by the claim of the man who organized the labor and directed the enterprise.

578 423 241 Thus in 1940, in the large oasis of Aksu, the Chinese district magistrate ordered the digging of a canal to open a new settlement at Sachintze, about forty miles south of the district city. Each head of a household applying for land in the new settlement was allotted a section of about one hundred feet on the bank of the main canal. He was then entitled to as much land reaching back from this canal frontage as he could clear and as much water as he needed to irrigate it. Land and water rights were thus combined, and were in proportion to the amount of labor at the disposal of the setder. It is not surprising to find both that quarrels over water rights are chronic, and that those who are powerful and successful within the community in other ways are usually successful also in maintaining and increasing their water rights.

566 312 423 More than a hundred years ago, at a time when the Chinese or Manchu imperial authority in Sinkiang was exercised only in questions of high policy and rarely interfered with questions of local custom, a Chinese writer recorded the abuses of the Begs or local notables, and the efforts made by the Chinese administration to "persuade" them to concede some of their water rights to poor peasants. In the eighteenth century, a Manchu writer noted that Begs or landed gentry had rights over households of *chakar* or serfs who were obliged to till their land for them.[13] By their claim on the labor of these serfs, the Begs under the doctrine of *mavat* also claimed the right to water from canals dug by the serfs.[14] *Chakar* serfdom still survives here and there. Field investigation revealed a landlord in Kucha with over two hundred

[13] Sung Yin, *A Sketch of Sinkiang*, written in the eighteenth century, published in 1821; Ch. 3, p. 28 (in Chinese).

[14] E. Zalkhina, *Outlines of the Agrarian Problem in Central Asia*, p. 9 (in Russian).

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households of *chakars*, from whom he claimed both labor services 312
and rent in kind. 423

When the water finally gets to the field, its allocation to the cultivator is calculated in terms of the flow for a certain number 312
of hours, according to the width and depth of the canal. Millers 624
have the right only to run water over the wheel, and must then 578
return it to the canal. Such matters, together with the maintenance of registers and the supervision of upkeep, are under the 691
authority of an official called the *mirab*, who is locally elected, 661
which means that in his election the locally influential families 423
usually determine the choice. In addition, Moslem religious officials have certain traditional rights, especially of adjudication. Within localities, disputes are most frequent in the spring, when each cultivator is eager to be the first to get water on his land. Between localities, the most important disputes are between upstream and downstream communities. Disputes have been going on for twenty-five years between Yarkand, which is big and powerful, and Merket, which is smaller but rich in the cultivation of cotton. Quarrels can be carried from lower to higher authority. A dispute between the villages of Punak and Malihalihan, in the subdistrict of Chira, was carried up to the district administrator of Khotan, who decreed that for two days each month in February, April, and June Punak should turn over its flow of water to Malihalihan. The intervention of higher authority is a traditional opportunity for the collection of bribes by Chinese officials.

Oases vary greatly in size but closely resemble each other in 361
structure. Every oasis has a village or town, sometimes a walled 443
city at its center. Larger oases may have several such towns. 463
These centers are called "bazaars" and serve as market places for farm produce. In the larger bazaars there are also artisans such as blacksmiths, carpenters, coppersmiths, cobblers, and wheelwrights. Smaller bazaars, which cannot support many permanent shops, have their market day on different days of the week and the merchants and artisans visit them in rotation.

Around the bazaars are the farms, each with its own home- 361
stead. An important function of an oasis bazaar is the distribution 241
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[161] 178 458 47 tion. Less than forty years ago the population of Sinkiang was registered at 2,003,931.[31] The latest official figures give 3,730,051. Neither figure has the reliability that is demanded of statistics in advanced countries, but it is probably true that the population has increased by at least a third and perhaps more. This increase means more peasants on the land in the oases, more who are willing to settle as colonists in nomad territory thereby increasing friction with the nomads, and more who migrate every summer as seasonal laborers from the Tarim oases to Jungaria and even into the republics of Soviet Inner Asia.

Pressure on the land has had a number of bad effects. Peasants are compelled to plant all land every year, leaving none fallow. As a result, one village sampled in the Yarkand oasis showed a decrease in the yield of wheat from fifteen-fold to only five-fold. The example may be exceptional in its severity, but it is representative of a trend.

Pressure on the land also aggravates the problems of land tenure. Increasing trade, especially trade with Russia since 1890, speeded up the change from diversified, self-sufficient agriculture to commercialized agriculture. After 1884 the old *mulkdar* or feudal landholders, who had been exempt from taxes, were compelled to pay a land tax to the Chinese provincial authorities. These two trends together caused money standards to supersede the old standard of hereditary status. The landholder with feudal rights called "the Beg," a term of aristocratic connotation, began to be replaced by a new class called *bai* — a term meaning simply "wealthy," a curious parallel to "plutocrat," which began to come into general use in England in the period of rapid social change marked by the Reform Bill of 1832. The parallel is made closer by the fact that many new *bais* were former Begs, just as in England many new directors of joint stock companies were holders of old landed estates.

[566] The condition of the peasant is governed by the fact that while he lives in a system which is increasingly penetrated by money values, he is also bound down by strong survivals of the old order

[31] Wang Shu-nan, *Hsinchiang T'u Chih*, Ch. 1, pp. 5–7.

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of things, such as the obligation to render labor services to his landlord. In money values, it was calculated in 1943 that the earnings of an agricultural laborer in Khotan for a full year were equivalent only to the value of one twelfth of an acre of medium-grade land. Share rents, however, dominate the lives of most peasants. If the landlord supplies only the irrigation water, the peasant must deliver to him half of the crop. If the landlord also supplies working animals, seed, and implements, he receives two thirds or more of the crop. As, in addition, taxes and other assessments sometimes amount to as much as one third of the crop; the peasant not infrequently has no legal claim to anything whatever at the end of the year, and is dependent on what the landlord thinks it necessary to leave him to keep him alive. This dependence of the peasant on the landlord takes the form of a debt which gives the landlord full control.

The economic crisis in Sinkiang is, in fact, a crisis of interacting and steadily mounting pressures, with no safety valves to give a margin for adjustment.

The exploitation of mines and of industry based on minerals would not automatically solve the agrarian problem. The experience of China has shown that if there is no agrarian reform the agrarian crisis gets worse, not better, in the near neighborhood of industrial centers like Shanghai; and at the same time urban labor, instead of creating a higher standard of living, finds its standards undermined by the rural unemployed. In Sinkiang, as everywhere else in Asia, a higher standard of living on the farm could improve buying power and give an impetus to industrialization; but industrialization alone cannot put an end to the agrarian crisis.

174 In periods both of centralization and decentralization the so-
178 cieties of Sinkiang have reflected different aspects of a slowly evolving feudalism. We have no historical description of a truly "primitive" society in Sinkiang; though the Stone Age finds prove that primitive peoples did once exist there, as in China itself. But the oasis "kingdoms" which the Chinese described some two thousand years ago were feudal, rather than primitive or tribal, both in their structure of rank and power and in such relationships as war and the collection of tribute. Nor do the Chinese chronicles describe steppe nomadism at a truly primitive level, but rather at the level of the formation of war bands and the development of early institutions to regularize personal loyalty which can be called "early feudal" or "proto-feudal."[1]

In general, it can be said that both the oasis society and the steppe nomad society tended to evolve toward higher feudal forms of development in periods of centralization, and to devolve back toward earlier forms in periods of decentralization. The main difference between the oasis society and the steppe society was that devolution in the steppe society tended to be more extreme, and to fall back to the war-band stage of development at the very threshold of feudalism.

174 A description of the societies of Sinkiang in terms of feudalism
• 566 must in itself be a test of theories of feudalism. Many Western
114 writers on feudalism are not prepared to admit that there is any society in Asia that can properly be described as "feudal." Lack of material from Asia in Western comparative studies of feudalism is, however, in the main attributable to the lag in Western studies in the social sciences as a whole in Asia.

A more serious difficulty is the fact that there are no criteria of

[1] An interesting attempt to describe what may be called the "process of emergence" of feudalism has been made by Professor S. Yushkov in his article "On the question of the pre-feudal ('barbarian') state," in *Questions of History*, No. 7 of 1946, Moscow, 1946, pp. 45–64 (in Russian). The article is of particular importance because it attempts to compare as "contemporary" (in Toynbee's sense) material taken from ninth and tenth century Kievan Russia, sixth to ninth century Anglo-Saxon England, and eleventh and twelfth century Mongolia.

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feudalism to which equal acceptance is given by all students of the subject. Thus Dr. Helen Maud Cam, writing of English feudalism, points out that "the social, the economic, the legal and the constitutional historian approach it with different mental assumptions." To the social historian, it is the consecration of inequality or the insistence on subordination. To the economic historian it is the organization of land cultivation by the exercise of rights over persons. To the legal historian it is the contractual relationship guaranteed by land and determined by tenure. To the constitutional historian landholding is the source of political power, and government functions are bound up with land tenure.

"Thus in studying different periods," she concludes, "the social, the economic, the legal and the constitutional historian will each apply his own test to the state of things he finds, and declare that this is, or is not, 'genuine feudalism,' while his conclusions will be hotly questioned by those who use a different criterion." [2]

On the other hand a great deal of the most important modern literature on Inner Asia, including Sinkiang, is in Russian; and even in Tsarist times the vocabulary of feudalism was usual among Russian scholars in dealing with the societies of Asia. With the Soviet writers, this practice becomes universal. On the other side of Sinkiang, Chinese sources are of the greatest importance for early and medieval history, and Chinese scholars are doing increasingly important work in the analysis both of historical data and of contemporary problems. The terms of feudalism are quite as important in the work of these Chinese scholars as they are in the Russian literature. In China today, scholars are divided by a controversy similar to the famous nineteenth-century debate between "Westerners" and "Slavophiles" in Russia. As in Russia, the heart of the discussion is whether the Chinese culture is so much a thing apart that it is inappropriate to use the terms used in discussing other cultures, or whether the phenomena of Chi-

[2] Helen Maud Cam, "The Decline and Fall of English Feudalism," in *Liberties and Communities in Medieval England*, Cambridge, 1944, p. 203; paper originally read before the International History Conference at Zürich in 1938.

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566 174 114 nese history are comparable to other historical phenomena, and can therefore be intelligibly described in universally accepted terms. Western scholars, even when dealing with an outlying province like Sinkiang, must keep abreast of the discussions among Chinese social scientists.

The Residue of History

175 In their first great historical period of penetration into Inner Asia under the Han Dynasty, for about two hundred years before and two hundred years after the birth of Christ, the Chinese were concerned primarily with defending the frontier of civilization in China against barbarian incursions from Mongolia and Inner Asia. The maintenance of this frontier was, for the state itself, a perpetual expense, not a profitable expansion. Trade there was, and individuals grew wealthy by it, but the Chinese were not "imperialists" planting the flag farther and farther forward in order to have trade follow it. They were not opening up colonial conquests in order to get at bulk supplies of cheap raw materials — the costs of transport were too high — nor was there a surplus of production in China forcing them to seek new markets.[3]

The curiosities and luxuries brought to China through the Inner Asian trade contributed to the ostentation of the court. On the other hand the commodities going by caravan from China to Inner Asia consisted in large part of tribute collected by nobles and by the state, before being consigned to the hands of privileged merchants, and therefore were in fact a tax on the people. Certainly the volume of goods leaving China was not determined by the buying power of Inner Asia, because the Chinese records

[3] Frederick J. Teggart, in his *Rome and China: A Study of Correlation in Historical Events*, Berkeley, 1939, lays great emphasis on "interruption of trade" along the Silk Route through Inner Asia as a cause of "correlated" wars on the Roman and Chinese frontiers, but does not raise the question of the difference between profitable expansive trade and trade which, though politically promoted in order to keep warlike barbarians contented, is a drain on the civilized country providing commodities for the barbarians.

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service. In 1812, however, an imperial decree allowed the garrison commander at Kulja to divide the Manchu-held land as permanent private property, exempt from tax. Under the terms of grant, such land was not to be leased to others for cultivation, and if farm hands were hired, they must be Manchus.[23] In the course of time, however, these terms became a dead letter and the land was freely leased and even sold to Chinese cultivators, officials and merchants.

In their main lines the structures of both the settled and the nomad societies of Sinkiang, as administratively revised under the Manchu Empire, outlasted the great Moslem rebellions of the nineteenth century and the Chinese Revolution of 1911. They even proved strong enough to contain the gradual commercialization of economic life during the past hundred years. Only now are they finally breaking down, caught between a securely established socialized state in Soviet territory and a rapidly spreading social revolution in Chinese territory.

As they break apart, these structures reveal a multiple stratification, the layers of which can be classified both socially and historically. Socially, they are graduated from arbitrary powers and privileges at the top to disfranchisement at the bottom. Historically, the stratification is more confused. In the alternating cycles of feudalism centralized under a strong imperial overlordship and feudalism decentralized under local oasis-states and rulers of nomad tribes, the incoming phase never completely swept away and replaced the institutions and administrative practices of the outgoing phase. Some of the characteristics of decentralization always lingered here and there, though unevenly, in the strongest phases of centralization; and conversely, even when oases were most completely independent of each other politically, and nomad tribes rejected the overlordship of other nomad tribes, the larger community of the oasis society as such and the society of the pastoral nomads as such was never entirely obliterated.

[23] *Institutes of the Manchu Dynasty*, edition of 1818, section "*Shih Li*" ("Precedents"), Ch. 842, p. 13 (in Chinese).

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178 631 566 As both societies break up, they first dislodge the top structure of the Chinese administrative bureaucracy. This bureaucracy represents all that is left of the centralizing overlord power of China in Inner Asia. It may soon be succeeded by another bureaucracy, as the Communists take over power in China; but for the moment it is breaking up.

Though for nearly forty years it has been ruling in the name of a Chinese Republic, this bureaucracy is essentially the same, both in its functions and in its lack of function, as that which the Manchus set up in the eighteenth century. Economically, it is a surtax on the total revenue of Sinkiang. Politically and administratively it has functioned to keep Sinkiang the same color on the map and to maintain, internationally, the convention that in Inner Asia the domains of the Chinese touch the domains of the Russians. Yet it has never integrated Sinkiang with China, making the life and wealth of Sinkiang a part of the life and wealth of China. The individual Chinese bureaucrat has returned from Sinkiang wealthy; but the Province of Sinkiang has contributed little to the State of China.

Below their own level, the Chinese cut into but at the same time conserved the feudal powers of the local ruling classes. The village elder, the landholding oasis magnate, the Mongol prince, the Kazakh chief — whatever they might be called — were forced to yield a double tribute: one to maintain the Chinese bureaucracy as such, and one to enrich the individual Chinese bureaucrat; but in order to enable them to yield this tribute, they had to be enabled to collect it, and for this purpose their traditional powers were maintained. In this way the surtax necessary to support the Chinese bureaucracy was in fact collected from the oasis farmer and the nomad herdsman.

178 566 438 Trade, in spite of the steady penetration of commercialization in the form of a money economy, preserved the essential feudal characteristic of privilege: both the Chinese bureaucrat and under him the "native headmen" prevented the operation of a free market by selecting individual merchants to whom they extended their protection, enabling them to evade taxes and to become

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monopolists, sometimes locally and sometimes on a provincial scale. In this way the provincial revenue from trade was cut down, but individually the protected merchant got rich, and enriched the individual bureaucrat or the clique of associated bureaucrats to whom he paid a tribute for his protection.

At the bottom level the individual cultivator and herdsman collected tribute from none, and paid out — in rents and taxes, in forced labor for special projects and in "customary services" to his immediate rulers — the tribute which those above him divided according to their position in the stratification of privilege. Though no legislation declared them to be serfs, both cultivator and herdsman were in fact survivors of the feudal system of enserfment, having duties but no rights, and being prevented from selling their services in a free market by administrative enforcement of the rights of all those above them to collect tribute in kind, forced labor for the community or the province, and "customary services" to individuals. Even the nominal significance of private property in land or cattle, among the poor, was blurred by debt obligations which prevented them from acting as free agents.

When a society breaks up, it never breaks up at random. Every society has its own kind of cohesion, and usually its cohesiveness is unequally distributed over different parts of the society. Between the units of cohesion are lines of stress; and cleavages, when they take place, usually follow these lines of stress. In considering the influences coming from Russia now at work upon the societies of Sinkiang, and the influences that may be expected to develop rapidly from a China in which Communists are consolidating their power, we must take into account both the influences themselves and the balance between cohesion and cleavage already existing within the societies on which they work.